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FROM: Barbara M. MacGregor, RN BSN

Health Officer

TO: Bay Area Chamber of Commerce

DATE: May 1, 2009

RE: Community Response to the H1N1 (aka Swine) Influenza A Outbreak

This letter is in regards to recent developments relating to the recent H1N1 Influenza A outbreak. I want to share with you some of the steps that Bay County Health Department is taking in response to these events, and recommend actions you can take to help reduce the spread of the virus and its health impacts. As you are probably aware, infection with this novel (new) virus has been identified in persons living in the United States, including two confirmed cases in Michigan to date, and we anticipate the number to grow.

As Bay County's Health Officer, my goal is to inform community leaders, businesses, schools, health care providers, and residents of the *potential* for disruption in your everyday lives in the days and weeks ahead, as new cases of H1N1 Influenza A emerge and how to address these potential issues. In the event of a pandemic, businesses and other employers will play a key role in protecting employees' health and safety, as well as limiting the negative impact to the economy and society. Planning for pandemic influenza is critical. Companies that provide critical infrastructure services, such as power and telecommunications, also have a special responsibility to plan for continued operation in a crisis and should plan accordingly. As with any catastrophe, having a contingency plan is essential. Enclosed is guidance from the Department of Health & Human Services and (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) for local businesses, industries, and other employers in planning for a pandemic outbreak, as well as other comparable catastrophes. We are requesting that you forward this information along to area businesses affiliated with the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce.

To ensure that we are prepared, the Bay County Health Department has implemented its Pandemic Influenza Plan that will support, facilitate, and coordinate our local response to this outbreak. Accordingly, the Health Department, in collaboration with the Bay County Emergency Management Division, has been working closely monitor the situation and work with our Federal, State, and local partners to respond. Finally, the Health Department is working with local health care practitioners to monitor patients with flu-like illness, expand public health

laboratory testing of potential flu specimens, and enhanced activities for various levels of community-wide disease surveillance.

The Bay County Health Department is receiving frequent updates from the CDC, and is working with the Michigan Department of Community Health to monitor the situation and immediately follow up on any suspected cases. This outbreak is a reason for concern but not for panic. I will inform you of additional activities or actions as necessary.

All Bay County residents need to practice the very best personal hygiene habits to prevent the spread of this disease. This is especially important for local employees, many of whom work in contact with the public, travel as part of their jobs, and care for individuals in a wide range of institutional settings.

To limit the spread of H1N1 Influenza A, I urge you to do the following:

- If you or your child get sick with flu-like symptoms, please *stay home from work or school/daycare* and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

For more information on H1N1 Influenza A, please visit the following websites. You may also contact the Bay County Health Department's Health Information Line at (989) 895-4192 to receive updated information on H1N1 Influenza A.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: www.cdc.gov/swineflu
Bay County Health Department: http://www.baycounty-mi.gov/Health/InfluenzaUpdates
Michigan department of Community Health: http://www.michigan.gov/mdch
World Health Organization: http://www.who

www.pandemicflu.gov

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Barbara MacGregor, Health Officer

H1N1 INFLUENZA: CONSIDERATIONS FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES

Social Disruption May Be Widespread

- Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted. These could include services provided by hospitals and other health care facilities, banks, stores, restaurants, government offices, and post offices.
- Prepare backup plans in case public gatherings, such as volunteer meetings and worship services, are canceled.
- Consider how to care for people with special needs in case the services they rely on are not available.

Being Able to Work May Be Difficult or Impossible

- Find out if you can work from home.
- Ask your employer about how business will continue during a pandemic. A Business Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist is available at:

www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/business/businesschecklist.html

- Plan for the possible reduction or loss of income if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.

Schools May Be Closed for an Extended Period of Time

- Help schools plan for pandemic influenza. Talk to the school nurse or the health center. Talk to your teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have materials, such as books, on hand. Also plan recreational activities that your children can do at home.
- Consider childcare needs.

Transportation Services May Be Disrupted

- Think about how you can rely less on public transportation during a pandemic. For example, store food and other essential supplies so you can make fewer trips to the store.
- Prepare backup plans for taking care of loved ones who are far away.
- Consider other ways to get to work, or, if you can, work at home.

People Will Need Advice and Help at Work and Home

Think about what information the people in your workplace will need if you are a manager. This may include
information about insurance, leave policies, working from home, possible loss of income, and when not to
come to work if sick. A Business Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist is available at:

www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/business/businesschecklist.html.

- Meet with your colleagues and make lists of things that you will need to know and what actions can be taken.
- Find volunteers who want to help people in need, such as elderly neighbors, single parents of small children, or people without the resources to get the medical help they will need.
- Identify other information resources in your community, such as mental health hotlines, public health hotlines, or electronic bulletin boards.
- Find support systems—people who are thinking about the same issues you are thinking about. Share ideas.

Be Prepared

Stock a supply of water and food. During a pandemic you may not be able to get to a store. Even if you can get to a store, it may be out of supplies. Public waterworks services may also be interrupted. Stocking supplies can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters. Store foods that:

- are nonperishable (will keep for a long time) and don't require refrigeration
- are easy to prepare in case you are unable to cook
- require little or no water, so you can conserve water for drinking

Stay Healthy

Take common-sense steps to limit the spread of germs. Make good hygiene a habit.

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in a waste basket.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Stay at home if you are sick.

It is always a good idea to practice good health habits.